



Ambassador Jeffrey L. Bleich – American Australian Association

**Remarks of Ambassador Bleich
American Australian Association Limited
Benefit Dinner in Honor of the Pratt Family
Crown Palladium, Melbourne**

(As prepared for delivery – April 8, 2010)

Thank you for that kind introduction. I am honored to be here tonight to celebrate the great work of the American Australian Association Limited, and the invaluable contributions of Jeanne Pratt, Anthony Pratt, and the Pratt family.

As a new Ambassador, I tend to receive a lot of advice. Much of it comes from here in Melbourne. Specifically from Collingwood supporters. Their advice is: “support Collingwood.”

But I also get advice from my wife. Her advice is that in the history of U.S.-Australia relations, no one has ever complained that the U.S. Ambassador did not speak long enough.

So I will be mindful of her advice tonight.

Tonight is very easy duty. It is easy to say good things about both this great association and the wonderful Pratt family. A few weeks ago, Anthony and I had arranged to have lunch together in Canberra when unexpectedly I received a call asking me to help break ground on a new dish being installed at the Deep Space Center in Tidbinbilla. Now most people in Anthony’s position might have suggested that I say “no, I have a lunch commitment” or that we move the lunch. But Anthony said – “why don’t we do both?” So we quickly wolfed down our lunch, piled into a car and raced off to the outskirts of ACT. When we got there, we were on a guarded facility, on a dirt road where our car wouldn’t drive. So we -- and all of the AFP protection team -- switched into an SUV and drove off to a remote site on a dirt road where a new dish would be built. Anthony is in this handsome business suit and elegant shoes, But he hops out, throws on a hard hat, . . . and then he disappears. I’m feeling sort of badly that I dragged him out to the middle of a paddock, without proper footwear, and then lost him somehow. But I’m a new Ambassador and so I figure, you know, mistakes happen. So I grab my shovel and do the ground-breaking.



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Now, afterward, when I got back to the car, there was still no sign of Anthony. And he is a tall man with red hair in a Saville Row suit in the middle of a paddock. So I should be able to spot him. So I become a little more concerned at this point. I start thinking about whether I might be disinvited from this dinner for losing the guest of honor in a paddock. When suddenly I hear this voice behind me. I see Anthony standing, with a shovel (I don't know where he got the shovel) and he's talking to the Chief scientist of NASA. And what he says is "how do we know that there was nothing faster than the speed of light since we rely on light to detect speed."

And the Chief scientist says, "I don't know. That's a good question."

Then Anthony handed him back the shovel, said "thanks," and left the Chief scientist looking very puzzled.

I think this little episode tells us something about the strength of the Australia and U.S. relationship, and the special place of the Pratts in building that relationship.

First, the story of the U.S. and Australia relationship is that there is no challenge that we won't take on together. This year is actually the 50th anniversary of the space agreement between the United States and Australia. 50 years ago, Australians and Americans were standing out there in that same paddock preparing to break ground on the most ambitious space program in history. Asking whether we could send a person to the moon and return him safely back to earth. 10 years later the voice of Neil Armstrong came through one of those dishes and shared with the world what we had done together: "one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." Faced with impossible challenges, our Countries did not stand on ceremony, or stand at all. We rolled up our sleeves, asked questions that others didn't dare to ask, and shovels in hand, helped to build a better world.

Americans and Australians have done that on every dimension. From defending the Pacific, to capturing terrorists, from building channels of trade across a vast ocean, to creating a clean and sustainable energy future. In every instance, the people of our two nations have built our friendship through common purpose, by working to build a better world. As a result of this effort, today, America has no better friend in the world than Australia.

The Pratt family reflects that spirit. Get in the car, figure out where you're going when you get there, and start digging for answers. Whether it is digging for new medical breakthroughs, new educational opportunities, or a new model for sustainable consumption you've done this in your business, your foundation, and your lives.

And the American Australian Association Limited reflects that spirit. The Association builds things. With only a small office, it builds commercial and social ties, it advances



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educational and research collaboration, it commemorates history and it makes history. This has been the legacy of the outstanding outgoing director Geoff Gray and we know it will be the legacy of the incoming director John Olsen.

Finally, and most importantly, the Association accomplishes its work because of the people in this room. You support this work with your donations and with your devotion. Because of you, the relationship between our two nations is about more than just common interests, or strategy; it is that rarest of things – a friendship among nations.

So tonight, thank you all. You've all added another chapter to that story. With the proceeds of tonight's programs, another class of Australian scholars will receive fellowships to go the United States and pursue advanced research and study. And who knows, Anthony, one of them may just discover something faster than the speed of light!

Good on ya!